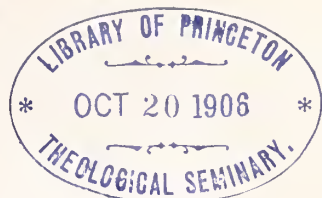


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The Famine in North Japan.

By Rev. William E. Lampe, Chairman of the
Foreign Committee of Relief.

July is a wet month in Japan but August usually brings some clear days. In the North during the entire summer of 1905 there was hardly one fine day. For thirteen days in succession neither sun, moon nor stars could be seen. The cold, wet weather discouraged the farmers, while in the cities and towns the price of rice rose 50%, as the fears that the rice crop would be a failure grew graver and graver. September was hot and rather dry, but this only caused the starchy juice in the heads of rice to shrivel up; and when the crop was harvested, it was discovered that there were very few of the white grains in the ocean of straw in the three *ken*, Miyagi, Fukushima and Iwate.

In many places the loss was total, but the final official figures for the entire three *ken* were: Miyagi 12% of the average yield, Fukushima 25% and Iwate 33%. Gunma *Ken* and a few others had poor crops but not so bad as these three in the North. It seems that nearly all of the rain fell on the east side of the range of mountains running down the center of the northern part of the main island. Yamagata on the west side of that range had almost an average crop while only twenty-five miles away the people of Kawasaki, a place on the east side, reaped only twenty-nine bushels from the same fields which in other years produced more than one thousand times as much. The so-called famine region is a well-defined area of 15,000 square miles, a strip

of country 200 miles long and 75 wide, with Sendai almost exactly in the center.

Nor is this the whole story. There was only half a crop three years ago, and then there was great suffering; the following year the war with Russia began, and the people, not yet on their feet, were called upon to make great sacrifice; the silk crop had been poor; wheat, as well as rice, had been none too good, and with official reports showing that the failure of crops meant a loss of 40,000,000 *yen* in the three *ken*, the patient country people were face to face with worse conditions than ever before in their lives. For the terrible Tempo famine was seventy years ago. If now as then there were no railroads or steamboats to bring in food stuffs, and if now as in the old feudal days one clan could not, or would not sell to another, many, many deaths would have resulted, and just as in the Tempo Age the corpses could have been counted by myriads.

Missionaries on the field going about their accustomed duties were fully aware of what was coming on. While out doing evangelistic work, they met with officials buying up seed rice in other provinces, for it was evident that there would be no seed in what was now the famine district. As even the straw was worthless, many fields were left uncut. Work became scarce and soon farm laborers had no employment whatever. Many persons who used to ride were now compelled to walk and jinrikisha men with large families became distressed. The chronic poor were lost sight of altogether and their condition became pitiful. The dark days had come and there was consternation on many faces.

The officials certainly deserve to be praised for their

faithful work. Three millions of people live in these three *ken*, and of that number one million were classed as poverty-stricken. The officials were responsible for this army and day and night they labored in their behalf. There were no holidays for any official, high or low. The winter days were all too short, and often four or five hours in the evenings a lamp would be burning beside each desk. Leading citizens with a few members of Parliament and other legislators formed a committee to appeal to the national government for aid. Just as during the war, there was no excitement, but the feeling of responsibility for the lives of their fellowmen rested heavily upon every one.

On the afternoon of Thanksgiving Day the Americans of Sendai and Morioka met for a service of praise and prayer. After a meeting, a consultation was held to consider how we could best help our stricken brothers. Five persons were appointed to represent those present, and when two days later these five met, it was unanimously decided to invite a representative of England and one of France to join, thus forming a committee of seven. Thus was organized the Foreign Committee of Relief, the first committee whose aim was to secure funds for those in distress because of the famine. The prime motive of the Committee was to enlist international sympathy and to act as a bureau of information. Being in close, sympathetic touch with the officials, we kept well posted as to the state of affairs and our reports were by everyone regarded as authoritative.

From a western point of view, the standard of living in Japan is low and many of the poor farmers of the North, the poorest part of the Empire, live year in and year out on little more than is sufficient to keep soul and body together.

Japanese and foreigners wrote much at the time the famine was at its worst, describing actual conditions, and it is not necessary to draw aside again at this time the curtain and reveal the scenes of agony and wretchedness. The pitiful cry was "no work," for these people were willing to work if there were work to be had. Large numbers tried to live on two *sen* a day. Heavy snows put an end to gathering food from the forests and hill sides, and the severest winter on record brought intense suffering.

Self-help was the official cry and the efforts of the officials met with great success. While actual deaths from starvation were very, very few, it was thought necessary to save the spirit of the people and better to allow some suffering, while making everyone feel his responsibility for his own support than to use large sums of money and make chronic paupers, lazy and unwilling to work. It is interesting to note that, while the actual loss was forty millions (a large part of which however fell upon the rich and well-to-do), hardly five per cent, of that sum was used for the relief of the poor.

In January the Foreign Committee of Relief made its first distribution, of nine thousand *yen*. This being the first systematic distribution throughout the three *ken* brought great relief. It was like rain upon parched ground. About this time the *Kyujitsukwai*, a semi-official committee of Japanese, was formed and began to receive contributions. Early in February we received four thousand dollars from Portland and seven thousand *yen* from Penang, and with this and further generous gifts from foreigners residing in Japan we were able to make our second distribution, this time sixteen thousand *yen*. President Roosevelt issued a

THE FOREIGN COMMITTEE OF RELIEF FOR THE FAMINE IN NORTH JAPAN.



America
REV. M. B. MADDEN,
(Christian.)

America
REV. J. H. DE FOREST, D.D.,
(Congregationalist)

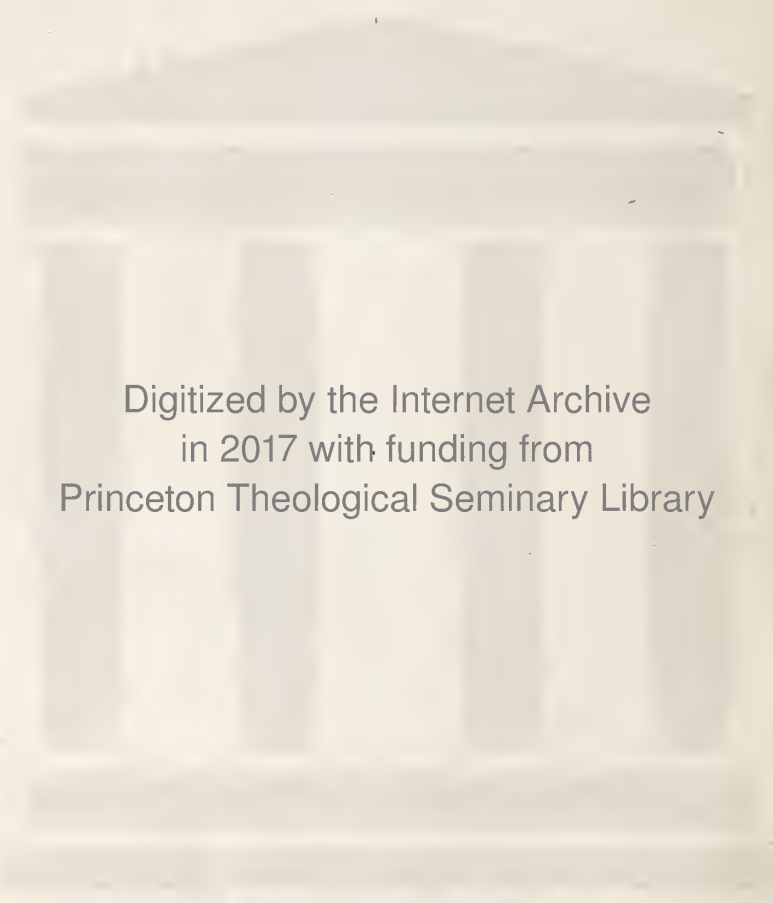
England
PROF. G. R. FORREST,
(Episcopal) 2nd Koto Gakko.

America
REV. C. S. DAVISON,
Sec'y and Treas.,
(Methodist.)

America
REV. WILLIAM AXING,
(Baptist.)

America
REV. WILLIAM E. LAMPE,
Chairman, (Reformed.)

France
LAMPE G. JACQUET,
(Roman Catholic.)



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proclamation, and by the end of February money began to pour in from the American Red Cross Society and the *Christian Herald*. By this time the life-saving machinery was in full running order and hundreds of thousands were being supplied with food for each day's needs.

The Parliament by unanimous vote of both houses remitted the taxes on rice land in the three *ken*. This was practically a gift of two million *yen* on the part of the Japanese nation to these stricken provinces. The Department of Education loaned several hundred thousand *yen* without interest in order that the schools might be kept up. The Department of War donated some food stuffs remaining over after the war and sold some at a merely nominal price. The local governments sold bonds to provide public relief works. 600,000 *yen* worth of rice for this year's seed was given without cost to the farmers, this amount being provided out of the treasuries of the three *ken*.

The Imperial gift of 50,000 *yen* was followed by contributions by princes, members of the cabinet, and innumerable Japanese subjects, amounting in all to about half a million *yen*.

Generous America sent through the Japanese Red Cross, the Foreign Committee of Relief, and individuals in Japan about 600,000 *yen* and sent food worth perhaps 50,000 *yen* more.

A Mansion House Fund was opened in London and Japan's allies sent about 150,000 *yen*.

The Foreign Committee of Relief furnished information which was translated into Chinese and forwarded to Peking. As a result, the Empress-Dowager contributed "150,000 *yen* from her private purse. Such a gift is without precedent

and should do much to draw together the hearts of these two great peoples of the East.”

Australia and Canada sent shipments of flour and some money. About 40,000 *yen* would represent the gift of each of the Colonies. The German government appropriated 25,000 *yen*. The King of Siam gave rice worth 15,000 *yen*. Indian merchants contributed 10,000 *yen*.

Other gifts came from all quarters of the globe. Although probably surpassed as to amount contributed, this famine called forth such an expression of world-wide sympathy as has almost never before been known in the world's history.

In the distribution of these funds, money was seldom and indeed almost never given. Foreign rice, wheat, *shōyu*, *miso*, and salt were bought and given as food. Expensive articles such as meat and fish could, of course, not be provided. In some cases clothing and medicine were given.

The total number of people fed was between 200,000 and 250,000. From 250,000 to 300,000 more were given employment on relief works, and many of these too were given food temporarily on days when it was not possible to work. In addition to this half million, there was another half million who received no help but were in distress for a number of months.

Almost every village received a cart load of “sympathy bags.” Newspapers, Womens' Patriotic Associations, Buddhists and Christians engaged in making and filling these bags, the total of which probably exceeded half a million. It might be remarked that, while the Buddhists held meetings all over the Empire and collected money

wherever possible, the only relief work done by them as far as could be seen was with these sympathy bags.

The sale of girls into an evil life is going on all of the time in Japan, and the famine region became especially good recruiting ground. The Salvation Army stepped in and did commendable work by taking more than a hundred girls from their homes of poverty and placing them among good families in Tokyo and Yokohama.

Instances of fathers, and mothers too for that matter, running off and leaving behind small children were more numerous than might be expected. There are orphans to be found in every *ken*, but in the North during the famine the lot of such became especially hard. In some homes there were too many mouths to feed and too many little bodies for sick or very poor parents to clothe. To care for children of these classes an orphanage or training school was opened in Sendai. This institution, called the *Tohoku Ikujiin*, has taken in 250 such children. The Okayama Orphanage is giving a home to 845 more such. The final remittance of the *Christian Herald* was forwarded through Count Matsukata, President of the Japanese Red Cross, to the Foreign Committee of Relief, and with this we were able to grant 25,000 *yen* each to the Sendai and Okayama Orphanages.

The Japanese Christian pastors and evangelists proved indefatigable workers and by their personal ministrations were able to relieve much suffering. Their committee secured food, clothing and money amounting to about 15,000 *yen*.

While we were not working as missionaries, the prominent part taken in the work of relief by missionaries was

known to every one. Here was an opportunity and it was embraced. Food has been given to the hungry, international bonds have been strengthened, and the relation of all men as brothers has become better understood. It has not been possible to make addresses wherever invited and now requests for Christian preaching are coming in from every quarter. From an evangelistic point of view, the real work is now just about to begin, but the ground has certainly been well prepared.

God grant that this year there may be a rich harvest of rice in the famine region and at the same time a great ingathering of souls!
